

2021

Review of *The Cat Man of Aleppo* by Irene Lathan and Karim Shamsi-Basha

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The Cat Man of Aleppo

Latham, Irene and Shamsi-Basha, Karim

Illustrated by Yoko Shimizu

G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York 2020

9781984813787

Everyone has a favorite animal. For some people, it's dogs, for others; llamas. For Mohammad Alaa Aljaleel (Alaa), it's cats. When war ravaged his home in Aleppo, Syria, many of Alaa's friends and family passed away or fled. Alaa stays and works as an ambulance driver. He tries his best to save as many people as he can, but the war keeps raging. Soon, Aleppo is very empty; all that remains is the cats. Alaa's heart breaks for the cats—they are alone and sad, just like him. Alaa begins to buy meat for the cats, and soon a dozen cats becomes hundreds. Where can he keep them all? Through the internet, Alaa shows pictures of the cats he has rescued and asks for donations so he can build them a shelter. He builds a sanctuary named the House of Cats Ernesto, named after one of his friend's pet. Alaa continues to raise money when he promotes the success of the sanctuary. Soon he can have other animals besides cats stay there! Alaa loves his home, and even though right now it may not be the same as the way he remembers it, the love he has shown to the people and animals of Aleppo has multiplied and blessed him in many unexpected ways. *The Cat Man of Aleppo* tells the true story of Alaa, who really does live in Aleppo and cares for hundreds of cats at his sanctuary there, with the help of a large team of volunteers. A quick Google search will pull up the sanctuary website and hundreds of images of the many animal tenants living there, which are posted every day with updates. These pictures are fantastic resources to show children learning about this true story. Not only is it an inspirational tale of how one man began a movement in his war-torn country, but it reminds children of the rewards of kindness and how good can be found in even the worst situations. **Highly Recommended** Katie Gosman, Centennial Library Intern, Cedarville University.